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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MARYLAND ENERGY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES THE MARYLAND SMART ENERGY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM**

*New program targets climate change through energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy innovation, and petroleum reduction for Maryland's local governments*

**Annapolis, Maryland** (February 6, 2013) — Today, the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) announced the Maryland Smart Energy Communities Program. This new program targets county, city, and local governments and seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy innovation, and petroleum reduction. In order to earn the Smart Energy Community designation, a county or local government must enact a set of policies, prescribed by MEA, in two of three specified areas, namely, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and alternative fuels. Upon passage of the policies, a community will earn the designation of Smart Energy Community and become eligible for grant funds to assist with implementation of the policies. With this new program offering, MEA seeks to incentivize government, at all levels, to lead by example in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Smart Energy Communities program encourages local governments to enact the state's aggressive energy-related policies for their own stock of buildings or fleet of vehicles," said Abigail Ross Hopper, Acting Director of the Maryland Energy Administration. "This program will help local governments to save energy, increase renewable energy generation, and lower the fuel consumption of their fleets, leading to lower costs for the communities and a cleaner, greener Maryland."

MEA expects to distribute grants of between \$20,000 and \$500,000 for energy-related projects. Exact grant size for any given community will depend on the size of the municipality and the number of applicants. Interested counties or local governments must submit a letter of intent to apply by March 1, 2013. The full application is due by April 5, 2013.

For more information, please visit <http://energy.maryland.gov/Govt/SmartEnergyCommunities>.

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The mission of the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) is to promote affordable, reliable, clean energy. MEA's programs and policies help lower energy bills, fuel the creation of green collar jobs, address environmental and climate impacts, and promote energy independence.